CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

OF THE

SOCIETY OF INQUIRY ON MISSIONS,

AND THE

GENERAL STATE OF RELIGION,

IN THE

THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AT PRINCETON, N. J.

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Louisville Presbyterian
Seminary Library

CONSTITUTION.

Preamble.

DESIROUS of obtaining important information respecting Domestic and Foreign Missions, Revivals of Religion, and the general operations of Christian benevolence, with a view of ascertaining our personal duty in reference to these objects: we, the subscribers, do agree to form ourselves into an association for inquiry, and, for the better regulation of our researches, adopt the following Constitution:

ARTICLE I. This Society shall be known by the name of the SOCIETY OF INQUIRY ON MISSIONS, AND THE GENERAL STATE OF RELIGION, IN THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY OF PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY.

ART. II. The officers of this Society shall be a President, a Vice-President, a Recording Secretary, a Corresponding Secretary, with two Assistants, to be known by the name of Associate Secretaries, a Treasurer, a Librarian, a Keeper of the Cabinet, and a Standing Committee of three, all of whom shall be annually chosen.

ART. III. All the officers mentioned in Article II., together with the chairman of each committee of inquiry, and the Corresponding Secretary of the committee on Foreign Missions, ex officio, shall constitute a Board of Managers, whose duty it shall be to have the general superintendence of the business of the Society.

ART. IV. It shall be the duty of the President

to preside in all meetings of the Society; and he shall be, ex officio, President of the Board of Managers.

Art. V. It shall be the duty of the Vice-President to preside in the absence of the President.

Art. VI. The Recording Secretary shall keep a copy of the constitution of the Society, a full minute of its proceedings, a list of all the members of the Society, and shall preserve all papers belonging to it. He shall be, ex officio, secretary of the Board of Managers.

Art. VII. The Corresponding Secretary, with the aid of his Associate Secretaries, shall conduct the correspondence of this Society with sister societies and other institutions, as the Board may direct.

Art. VIII. The Treasurer shall keep all moneys belonging to the Society, answer orders on the treasury from the standing committee, and present, at the close of each year, a report of the state of the funds.

Art. IX. The Librarian shall have charge of the books belonging to the library, keep a correct catalogue of them, see that they are neatly labelled and numbered, and, at the close of the year, shall make a report of their condition.

Art. X. The Keeper of the Cabinet shall adopt such measures, as the Board of Managers approve, to increase the number of valuable minerals and curiosities, arrange them in a judicious and scientific manner, and, at the close of the year, report to the Society the names of donors and the general condition of the cabinet.

Art. XI. The Standing Committee shall have the management of the funds, the care of the reading room, examine the library, the books of the Recording Secretary, and the accounts of the Treasurer, do such other business as is assigned them

in the by-laws, and make a report of their proceedings at the last regular meeting of each session.

ART. XII. The business of inquiry on missionary and other benevolent operations, shall be conducted by nine committees of inquiry, viz.

1. On *Foreign Missions*, to consist of not less than five nor more than thirty members.

2. *Domestic Missions*, five to twenty members.

3. *Sabbath Schools, Bible Classes* and *Maternal Associations*, five to twenty members.

4. *Revivals of Religion*, five to twenty members.

5. *Bible, Tract* and *Education Societies*, five to twenty members.

6. *Sailors* and *Soldiers*, five to twenty members.

7. *Africans* and *Colonization*, five to twenty members.

8. *Public Morals*, five to twenty members.

9. *Romish Church* and *Infidelity*, five to twenty members.

And, in constituting or reorganizing a committee of inquiry, the President, Vice-President and Recording Secretary shall be a committee to appoint the number of members requisite to compose it.

ART. XIII. The particular subjects to which the inquiries of each committee shall extend, are assigned as follows:

1. To the committee on *Foreign Missions*—the general subject of Foreign Missions, including the advance of the spirit of missions in Christian countries, operations in other lands, and the present attitude of the world towards the gospel. The correspondence of the Society with foreign missionaries is conducted by this committee.

2. To the committee on *Domestic Missions*—the enterprize of supplying the destitute of our own land with the gospel, and the efforts made by foreign countries in behalf of home missions.

3. To the committee on *Sabbath Schools, Bible*

Classes and *Maternal Associations*—the present state of these associations, efforts to extend their influence, such improvements in the plan of the respective systems, as they may deem worthy of attention, and the blessings which appear to accompany their operations.

4. To the committee on *Revivals of Religion*—accounts of existing or recent revivals, the means blessed in their promotion, with interesting cases of conversion, and the general results.

5. To the committee on *Bible, Tract* and *Education Societies*—the operations of these institutions, and the general state of theological education in this and other countries, with such facts relating to the general progress of education, as may be important.

6. To the committee on *Sailors* and *Soldiers*—all efforts to improve the social and religious condition of seamen, boatmen and soldiers, the best methods of gaining access to these several classes of men, the peculiar character of Christian sailors, and the connexion of the seamen's cause with foreign missions.

7. To the committee on *Africans* and *Colonization*—all efforts in behalf of the coloured people, including their education, colonization, emancipation, and other means to improve their moral and intellectual condition.

8. To the committee on *Public Morals*—all the means employed, or plans proposed by Temperance, Prison Discipline, Moral Reform, and kindred associations for the improvement of public morals.

9. To the committee on the *Romish Church* and *Infidelity*—the state of the Romish Church in this and other countries, efforts to propagate or oppose the system, its influence on the civil, social and moral condition of communities, with the efforts of infidels to diffuse their poisonous principles.

Art. XIV. Each of the committees of inquiry

shall present to the Society an annual report, accompanied by such other exercises on the subjects assigned to it, as the committee may think proper, in the following order:

The committee on Foreign Missions at the regular meeting in January.

The committee on Domestic Missions in December.

The committee on Sabbath Schools, Bible Classes and Maternal Associations in February.

The committee on Revivals of Religion in March.

The committee on Bible, Tract and Education Societies in April.

The committee on Sailors and Soldiers in May.

The committee on Africans and Colonization in July.

The committee on Public Morals in August.

The committee on the Romish Church and Infidelity in September.

Immediately preceding these reports, and succeeding the reading of letters and obituaries, the committee on Foreign Missions shall make a monthly report, to be followed by reports from four other committees in their regular order, which shall alternate with the remaining four, so that there shall be five monthly reports at each meeting, provided no committee present a monthly report and an annual report at the same meeting.

Art. XV. The annual reports of the committees of inquiry, after being accepted by the Society, shall be committed to the Recording Secretary, to be preserved and bound under his direction.

Art. XVI. The regular meetings of the Society shall be held on the first day of every month during the sessions of the Theological Seminary (except when this will interfere with Sabbath, in which case the Society shall meet on the following *Monday*), and its meetings shall be opened and

closed with prayer by the President, or by some member of the Society at his request.

ART. XVII. Any theological student may be received into this Society by a vote of a majority of its members.

ART. XVIII. Any member of this Society shall be dismissed at his request, unless his arrearages are unpaid, or unless he has some property of the Society in his possession.

ART. XIX. All regular members of good standing in the Society, on their dismission from the Theological Seminary, shall be considered honorary members.

ART. XX. Proper persons may be admitted as honorary members.

ART. XXI. On the death of any present or former member of this Seminary, a committee of three or more shall be appointed to prepare an obituary of the deceased.

ART. XXII. The Society shall have power to tax its regular members, and to make by-laws not affecting this constitution.

ART. XXIII. In case of the extinction of this Society, its library shall be incorporated with the Green Library of the Theological Seminary.

ART. XXIV. No addition to or alteration of this constitution shall be made but by vote of two thirds of the members present at a regularly notified meeting, nor unless the proposed amendment shall have lain on the table four weeks.

BY-LAWS.

ART. I. *Of the Board of Managers.*

SECTION 1. It shall be the duty of the Board of Managers to superintend all the publications of the Society, to purchase such books for the library as they may deem proper, and to have the general supervision of the funds.

SECT. 2. It shall be the duty of the Board to open or close any correspondence, and to decide upon all other miscellaneous business of the Society.

SECT. 3. Any proposition made to the Board by any member of the Society, shall be presented in the form prescribed in Art. IX. Sect. 17, and acted upon as soon as possible.

SECT. 4. It shall be the privilege of the Board to examine the minutes of the several committees of inquiry as often as once in each year, and to take other measures, if necessary, to ascertain whether they attend to the duties respectively assigned them. If delinquencies appear, the Board shall admonish the committee, report the case to the Society, or, if the offence be repeated, they may, after mature deliberation, even disband the committee.

SECT. 5. It shall be the duty of the Board to examine and approve the minutes of the Standing Committee, and also their semi-annual report before it is presented to the Society.

SECT. 6. No alteration of the constitution or by-laws shall be made, except on the recommendation of the Board.

SECT. 7. The Board shall not act upon any proposition to amend the constitution or by-laws within four weeks from the time of its presentation.

SECT. 8. If articles of the constitution or by-laws, to which no penalty is annexed, are violated, the Board shall notice the offence, and impose such penalty as they think proper.

SECT. 9. It shall be the duty of the Board to make a report of their proceedings at each regular meeting of the Society.

SECT. 10. The Board, at each of their regular meetings, shall appoint some one of their number to defend their decisions in cases of appeal to the Society.

SECT. 11. The regular meetings of the Board shall be held sometime during the week immediately preceding that in which the regular meeting of the Society will occur; and two days' notice of the time at which the Board

will meet, shall be given on the bulletin. The Secretary shall keep a roll of the members of the Board, and note the absentees, who shall be required to render an excuse. The meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer.

Sect. 12. Extra meetings of the Board may be called by the President at the request of *three* members.

Sect. 13. The Board shall have the privilege of filling all vacancies that may occur in their number.

Art. II. *Correspondence.*

Sect. 1. The general correspondence of the Society shall be conducted by the Corresponding Secretary and his assistants. It shall be their duty to take from the office all letters addressed to the Society, to read the whole, or such parts as they may deem necessary before the Society, and prepare answers as soon as convenient, subject to the direction of the Board of Managers, at each regular meeting of which they shall report their proceedings.

Sect. 2. The collection of information respecting the state of religion, the interest felt in missions, and benevolent operations in general, shall be regarded as an object of primary importance, and in the preparation of letters to corresponding bodies, the Secretary shall keep this object constantly in view.

Sect. 3. No letter prepared by one Secretary shall be sent, until it has been submitted to his associates for their approbation.

Sect. 4. Every member of this Society, on leaving the Seminary, is requested to transmit to the Corresponding Secretary all such information as will be likely to prove interesting or useful.

Sect. 5. It shall be the duty of the Corresponding Secretary to register all letters written and received, and to record at least a synopsis of their contents in a book kept for the purpose.

Sect. 6. He shall carefully preserve and file all letters received in his department, that at suitable intervals they may be arranged in volumes and bound.

Sect. 7. Bound volumes of letters shall be kept by the Secretary, or deposited in the library.

Art. III. *Committees.*

Sect. 1. Each committee of inquiry shall regularly meet at least once in each month during term time. Other meetings may be held at pleasure.

Sect. 2. The committees shall keep correct minutes of their proceedings, and, when required, shall submit them to the Board of Managers for examination.

Sect. 3. Each committee is authorized to appoint its officers, which shall be done annually at the last regular meeting in the Summer term; and at the next meeting of the Board of Managers, shall report the name of its chairman.

Sect. 4. Each committee may add to its number within the limit appointed in the constitution; provided, however, that no person shall be elected

who is not a member of the Society, and that no member belong to more than two committees at the same time. The names of members, thus added, shall be reported to the Board of Managers at their stated meeting next following the time of the addition, and entered on their minutes.

SECT. 5. No more than eight minutes shall be allowed to a monthly report, nor more than one hour to an annual report and the accompanying exercises.

SECT. 6. It shall be the duty of each committee of inquiry to see that a copy of its annual report, properly transcribed on letter paper, is committed to the Recording Secretary of the Society, within one month from the time at which it was presented to the Society.

SECT. 7. Should any subject arise which ought to be made *a matter of special inquiry*, it shall be referred to one of the existing committees of inquiry by the Board of Managers.

SECT. 8. The Standing Committee shall procure, as soon as possible, such books for the library, and periodicals for the reading room, as the Board of Managers may order, attend to the payment of bills thereby incurred, and other pecuniary expenses of the Society, subject always to the direction of the Board.

SECT. 9. In their orders on the Treasurer, they shall specify the object or objects to which the money is to be appropriated; and shall be careful to take receipts for all payments.

SECT. 10. They shall keep a faithful minute of their proceedings, and present the record for examination as often as the Board may direct.

SECT. 11. Committees on obituaries shall prepare and present the memoirs respectively assigned to them, within six months from the time of their appointment. In cases of necessity, the Board may extend the time at their discretion.

SECT. 12. Special committees shall report to the Board at the stated meeting next following the time of their appointment, unless the Board shall otherwise direct.

ART. IV. *Of the Library.*

SECT. 1. The library shall be opened every Wednesday from two till three o'clock in the Winter session, and from half past two till half past three in the Summer session.

SECT. 2. Regular members shall not have the privilege of drawing books from the library at any other time than the appointed library hours, except by the special permission of the Librarian.

SECT. 3. No member shall have from the library, at one time, more than two volumes, unless in special cases, at the discretion of the Librarian.

SECT. 4. No book shall be taken from the library until it is registered by the Librarian.

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Sect. 5. Any person who shall take a book from the library without permission, or in violation of the rules, shall incur a fine of *fifty cents* for every offence, and be subject to an additional fine of *ten cents* for every day that the book is retained, and to private admonition from the Standing Committee, or public censure before the Society.

Sect. 6. No member shall retain a book from the library longer than two weeks, unless in special cases, at the discretion of the Librarian; and all books shall be returned on the Wednesday preceding the last regular meeting in each session.

Sect. 7. Every book not returned at the time appointed, shall subject the holder to a fine of ten cents a week for the time that it is retained.

Sect. 8. All damages done to books shall be noticed by the Librarian, assessed by the Standing Committee, and paid by the damagers.

Sect. 9. No person, who has incurred a fine at the library, shall be permitted to draw books until that fine is paid.

Sect. 10. Such members of College as desire it, may draw books from the library on signing a written promise to conform to its regulations.

Art. V. *Of the Reading Room.*

Sect. 1. The reading room shall be under the direction of the Standing Committee, who shall see that it is properly warmed and otherwise prepared for the accommodation of members, and whose duty *alone* it shall be to take from the post office the periodicals or pamphlets belonging to the Society, arrange the same in the reading room, and, after suitable intervals, dispose of them as the interests or the rules of the Society may require.

Sect. 2. No paper or pamphlet may be removed from the reading room without permission from the Standing Committee under penalty of *fifty cents* for each offence.

Sect. 3. All intentional mutilation of papers or pamphlets belonging to the Society, shall subject the offender to such a penalty as the Standing Committee may impose.

Art. VI. *Of Obituaries.*

Sect. 1. After the obituary of a deceased brother has been read to the Society and accepted, it shall be committed to the standing committee, and legibly transcribed, under their direction, in a blank book of convenient size, kept in the library for the purpose.

Sect. 2. This book of obituaries shall not be taken from the library, except for the purpose of transcribing an obituary, for which work two weeks only shall be allowed; or by express permission of the Board of Managers.

Sect. 3. One dollar only shall be allowed as a compensation for transcribing an obituary, except in special cases, to be determined by the Board of Managers.

Art. VII. *Of Publications.*

Sect. 1. Nothing shall be committed to the Board of Managers for publication, without the consent of the Society, which consent shall be given without discussion.

Sect. 2. When letters, obituaries, reports, essays or other articles are referred for publication, the Board may exercise discretionary power in sending them to the press.

Sect. 3. The Board shall have the privilege of recommending to the Society such articles for publication as they may think proper.

Sect. 4. The Board may determine from what press any publication shall issue; they shall also be authorized to make such alterations, corrections, or selections, as they may think proper in the pieces laid before them—the author or authors of such pieces, if members of the Society, being considered members of the Board for the time being, shall have the privilege of acting with the Board whilst their productions are under consideration.

Sect. 5. The Society shall not be put to any expense for publications without its own consent,; but if any money should accrue from them, it shall be added to the funds of the Society.

Sect. 6. No article shall be published by any committee in their own name, or in the name of the Society, unless authorized according to Sect. 1.

Art. VIII. *Of Elections.*

Sect. 1. The annual election of officers shall take place on the day of the last regular meeting of the Society in the summer session, at 11 o'clock, A.M.

The Treasurer, Librarian and Standing Committee shall enter on the duties of their respective offices immediately after the election, and the remaining officers at the commencement of the Winter session.

Sect. 2. The election of an orator and essayist shall be made on the day of the first regular meeting of the Society in each session, at 11 o'clock, A.M.

At the same time alternates shall be chosen.

Sect. 3. The mode of procedure in the election of officers shall be as follows: after an opportunity has been given for nominations, the Society shall proceed to vote by ballot. If, when the votes for officers are collected, it be found that no member has a plurality of the whole number of votes given, the two candidates having the highest number shall be voted for again, and the election determined accordingly.

Art. IX. *Rules of Proceeding.*

Sect. 1. If a quorum be not assembled at the hour appointed, any two members shall be competent to adjourn from time to time, that an opportunity may be given for a quorum to assemble.

To constitute a quorum of the Society, twenty members shall be requisite, and of the Board, a majority of its members.

Sect. 2. Immediately after the opening of the Society (or of the Board), the minutes of the previous meeting shall be read, and, if requisite, corrected.

Sect. 3. The President shall decide all points of order. All decisions of the chair shall be subject to an appeal to the Society (or the Board), by any two members.

Sect. 4. Business left unfinished at the last sitting, is ordinarily to be taken up first.

Sect. 5. A motion must be made and seconded, and afterwards repeated by the President, or read aloud, before it is debated; and every motion shall be reduced to writing, if the chair or any member require it.

Sect. 6. Any member, who shall have made a motion, shall have liberty to withdraw it, with the consent of his second, before any debate has taken places thereon, but not afterwards, without the leave of the body.

Sect. 7. On questions of order, adjournment, postponement, commitment, or the previous question, no member shall speak more than once. On all other questions each member may speak twice, but not oftener without express leave of the body.

Sect. 8. When a question is under debate, no motion shall be received, unless to amend it, to commit it, to postpone it, for the previous question, or to adjourn.

Sect. 9. An amendment may be moved on any motion, and shall be decided before the original motion.

Sect. 10. If a motion under debate contains several parts, any two members may have it divided, and a question taken on each part.

Sect. 11. A question which has been decided, or a subject which has been indefinitely postponed, shall not be reconsidered during the official year of the Board, unless by the consent of two-thirds of the members present.

Sect. 12. Every member when speaking shall address himself to the President, and no member shall address another except through the chair. No member shall engage in private conversation without the permission of the President.

Sect. 13. No speaker shall be interrupted, unless he be out of order, or for the purpose of correcting mistakes or misrepresentations.

Sect. 14. If more than one person arise to speak at the same time, the member who is most distant from the President's chair shall speak first.

Sect. 15. When the President has commenced taking the vote, no further debate or remark shall be admitted, unless there has evidently been a mistake; in which case, the mistake shall be rectified, and the President shall recommence taking the vote.

Sect. 16. When a vote is taken by ballot, the President shall vote with the other members; but he shall not vote in any other case, unless the body

be equally divided, when, if he does not choose to vote, the question shall be lost.

Sect. 17. If any member of the Society wishes to bring any business before the Board of Managers, he shall make known his request in writing to one of their number, who shall lay it before the Board.

Sect. 18. An appeal may be made to the Society from any decision of the Board. If the appeal be seconded, the appellant shall state his reason for appealing, and the advocate of the Board shall state the grounds of their decision, after which the question sustaining the appeal shall be taken without discussion.

Art. X. *Miscellanies.*

Sect. 1. The hour at which the Society shall assemble, on the day of the regular meeting, shall be two o'clock, P. M., and, during the session of the Society, no member shall leave the room without permission from the presiding officer.

At some time during each regular meeting a psalm or hymn shall be sung.

Sect. 2. At the close of each session of the Theological Seminary, a semi-annual meeting shall be held, at which time an Oration on the subject of Missions, and an Essay on some subject connected with the objects of the Society, shall be delivered by members previously appointed.

Sect. 3. Every member, on his admission, shall pay into the hands of the Treasurer the sum of seventy-five cents, and the farther sum of fifty cents every succeeding term whilst he remains a member, thus making three payments per annum.

Sect. 4. Every member shall pay his dues to the Society before the second stated meeting of each term; and it shall be the duty of the Treasurer to report to the Board the names of all delinquents.

Sect. 5. All necessary expenses for postage shall be defrayed by the Society.

Sect. 6. The Recording Secretary shall note in the index to the Minutes of the Society, the page where rules, resolutions, &c., are recorded.

Sect. 7. The constitution and by-laws shall be read before the Society at its first regular meeting in each year.

Brief Sketch of the History and Object of the Society.

The propriety of forming a Society of Inquiry in this Seminary, seems to have been first suggested by "one of the students," in January 1814, and a committee was appointed to prepare a constitution. The Society was organized on Tuesday evening, March 1st, 1814. The original members were Messrs. John Barnard, William Blain, Lebbeus Booth, Phineas Camp, John Covert, Leveret J. F. Huntington, David Oliphant, Samuel Robertson, John Ross, Thomas C. Searle, Reuben C. Smith, Benjamin F. Stanton, Jehiel Talmage, Henry R. Weed, Backus Wilbur and Halsey Wood.

The exercises of the Society for several years were *principally the communication of religious intelligence by members generally, a report on the history and condition of some mission, or of the religious condition, &c. of a portion of Christian or heathen lands, and a discussion of some subject connected with the objects of the Society.*

Various improvements in the mode of prosecuting *inquiry* were introduced at different periods. In December 1823, the Society "resolved to open a correspondence with each presbytery in the United States, requesting a statement of the vacant congregations, wants of the churches with the state of religion." Replies were received from most, if not all, these bodies, and the information embodied in a general report. Various changes in the *organization* of the Society were also made, and, in March 1829, the Board of Managers was first instituted, to which is committed the management of miscellaneous business. The constitution has been several times revised. The most important change was made in August 1831, when the committees of inquiry were introduced. The last revision took place in January 1835, and the constitution and by-laws, in their present form, were adopted on the 2d of March.

The number of regular members is now one hundred and ten. The whole number, since the organization, is about eight hundred and forty-five. Honorary members *elect*, fifty. The library contains nearly one thousand volumes.

"The object of this Society, as its name imports, is to collect missionary intelligence from all quarters, and to promote a spirit of missions among its members. In pursuance of this object, a correspondence has been opened with foreign missionaries in all parts of the world, and an intercourse by letters is kept up with other similar societies in this country and Europe. This correspondence has been increasing in interest every year, and has been the vehicle through which much important intelligence has been obtained, and communicated to the Christian public.

"It may not be improper for me to observe, that, in my opinion, no part of the exercises in the Theological Seminary has been attended with more manifest good effect than those which appertain to the proceedings of this Society: and there can be little doubt, that some of those who are now labouring successfully among the heathen, received their first missionary impulse from the ideas suggested, the intelligence received, and the solemn scenes which they here witnessed: and when the thoughts of those who have been removed for years from the place of their Theological education, revisit these sacred walls, there is probably nothing which is remembered with deeper interest, than the *transactions* of the *first day of the month.*"—*Dr. Alexander's Advertisement to Dr. Philips' Letter.*

Princeton Theo. Sem. May 1, 1835.

AMENDMENTS

To Art. XII. XIII. and XIV. of the Constitution; and Art. III. of the By-Laws. Extracted from the Minutes, April 24, 1838.

Resolved, That the Constitution and By-Laws of the Society be amended by reducing the number of Committees of Inquiry to five, and for this purpose, that the Second and Fourth; the Third and Fifth; the Sixth and Seventh; and the Eighth and Ninth be united: each to consist of not less than five, nor more than thirty members.

Each Committee shall present to the Society an Annual Report and an Essay alternately (each not to exceed forty-five minutes), in the following order:—

Com. on Foreign Missions, an Essay in January, and a Report in February.

Com. on Public Morals, Romish Church, and Infidelity, an Essay in March, and a Report in September.

Com. on Bible and Tract Societies, and Religious Education, a Report in April, and an Essay in August.

Com. on Sailors and Soldiers, and Africans, a Report in July.

Com. on Domestic Missions and Revivals, an Essay in May, and a Report in December.

Each Committee shall make a *ten minutes Report* monthly, except at the meeting when it presents an Annual Report or Essay.

These amendments shall go into operation August 1, 1838.